

MEDIA RELEASE

LAUNCH OF NEW HERITAGE GALLERY AT VICTORIA THEATRE AND VICTORIA CONCERT HALL



Programme booklet of SSO's inaugural concert at the Victoria Concert Hall, 1980. Courtesy of Professor Bernard Tan.



A ballet performance at the Victoria Theatre. Courtesy of Mun Chor Seng.

Singapore, 27 January 2015 – For many Singaporeans, the Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall hold a special place in their hearts. Whether as a spectator enjoying a performance or a play, or a participant in one of the many shows staged there, the Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall are iconic fixtures in Singapore's arts and cultural scene.

2. Today, all of this will be chronicled and remembered through the launch of the well-loved National Monument's first heritage gallery: *A Monument to Our History*. Housing a collection of memorabilia depicting its history and collective stories from the community, this gallery pays tribute to the veritable institution with a showcase of its rich legacy and heritage.

3. Curated by the National Heritage Board (NHB), *A Monument to Our History* celebrates the architectural highlights, stories and memories of the National Monument as well as its milestones as an iconic performance venue for local and international acts in Singapore. The gallery features seven sections presented chronologically and tracing the grand old dame's significant moments and achievements, namely: *Early Beginnings; Inside the Clock Tower; War Years; Singapore's March to Independence; A Home for Singapore's Performing Arts and Entertainment; A Community Space; and Restoring the National Monument*.

4. Visitors can also discover lesser known facts of this momentous building, such as its role as a makeshift hospital during the Second World War, a venue for the inaugural meeting



of the People's Action Party in 1954, as well as the launch pad of Singapore's pilot television broadcasting service, *Television Singapura* in 1963.

5. In addition, the exhibition showcases memorabilia and photographs of past performances at the theatre and concert hall, which are contributed by schools, performing arts groups and individuals. For instance, one of our arts and heritage pioneers, Professor Bernard Tan, contributed a programme booklet featuring the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's debut performance at the Victoria Concert Hall in 1980. Other contributors include performing groups such as The Stage Club which shared programme booklets and posters of its past performances at the Victoria Theatre. Together, these contributions enrich our collective memories of this cherished institution.

6. Professor Bernard Tan shares, "The Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall holds very special memories for myself and many Singaporeans. I am honoured to be able to contribute to this heritage gallery and hope that many Singaporeans and visitors will be able to learn about the rich history behind this National Monument and the important role it has played in the local performing arts scene over the years."

7. To complement the exhibits, multimedia clips showcasing the monument's significant events are also screened. Eyewitnesses' accounts of the Victoria Memorial Hall during and after the war and excerpts of the VCH Organ Series can also be heard at the audio station in the gallery.

8. The heritage gallery opens today as part of the *Arts & Heritage Pioneer Generation Tribute 2015* event organised by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY). It is located on Level 3 of the Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall, which was gazetted as a National Monument in 1992.

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is now a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.